

basis of performance reviews to be conducted on site and using other information submitted. USDA may also commission evaluations of the Empowerment Zone program as a whole by an impartial third party. Evidence of continual involvement of all segments of the community, including low income and disadvantaged residents, must be evidenced in the implementation of the strategic plan.

§ 25.403. Ongoing 2-year work plan requirement.

(a) Each Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community shall prepare and submit annually, work plans for the subsequent 2-year interval of the designation period.

(b) The 2-year work plan shall be submitted to USDA 45 days prior to the start of the applicable 2-year period.

(c) The 2-year work plan must include the following sections and content:

(1) *Section 1—Work Plan.* Identify the benchmark goals to be achieved in the applicable 2 years of the strategic plan, together with the benchmark activities to be undertaken during the applicable 2 years of implementation. Include references to the applicable baseline conditions and performance indicators to be used in assessing performance.

(2) *Section 2—Operational Budget.* For each benchmark activity to be undertaken in the applicable 2 years of the strategic plan, set forth the following information:

- (i) Expected implementation costs;
- (ii) Proposed sources of funding and whether actual commitments have been obtained;
- (iii) Technical assistance resources and other forms of support pledged by Federal, State and local governments, non-profit organizations, foundations, private businesses, and any other entity to assist in implementation of the community's strategic plan, and whether this support is conditional upon the designation of the community as an Empowerment Zone; and
- (iv) Documentation of applications for assistance and commitments identified as proposed funding and other resources.

§ 25.404 Validation of designation.

(a) *Maintaining the principles of the program.* The empowerment zone, enterprise community or champion community (the designated community) must maintain a process for ensuring ongoing broad-based participation by community residents consistent with the approved application and planning process outlined in the strategic plan.

(1) *Continuous improvement.* The designated community must maintain a process for evaluating and learning from its experiences. It must detail the methods by which the community will assess its own performance in implementing its benchmarks, the process it will use for reviewing goals and benchmarks and revising its strategic plan.

(2) *Participation.* The designated community must develop as part of its strategic plan a written plan for assuring continuous broad-based community participation in the implementation of the strategic plan and the means by which the strategic plan is implemented, including board membership in the lead entity and other key partnership entities.

(b) *Administration of the strategic plan.* The strategic plan must be administered in a manner consistent with the principles of the program contained in § 25.202(a).

(1) *Lead entity.* The lead entity must have legal status and authority to receive and administer funds pursuant to Federal, state and other government or nonprofit programs.

(2) *Capacity.* The lead entity must have the capacity to implement the strategic plan, as demonstrated by audited financial statements as of the most recent fiscal year or other documentation that may be requested by USDA.

(3) *Board membership.* The membership of the board must be representative of the entire socio-economic spectrum in the designated community including business, social service agencies, health and education entities, low income and minority residents. Board membership may be determined by either broad-based election or by appointment to meet this diversity requirement; however, not more than 45 percent of board members may be selected by appointment. Elections of

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community residents to the board may be done by any locally acceptable process; however, at least one board member from each of the designated community's census tracts must be elected and representative of the low income residents in their census tract. The Deputy Administrator, Office of Community Development, may waive the 45 percent maximum appointment limit only for Tribal Governmental Organizations where the Deputy Administrator determines, in writing, that a more representative board would be obtained through the appointment process.

(4) *Partnerships.* The relationship between the designated community's lead entity board and local governments and other major regional and community organizations operating in the same geographic area is critical to the community's success in implementing its strategic plan. Every effort should be made to identify and maintain relationships with local partners. Documentation including, but not limited to, minutes of meetings, benchmark activity reports and annual reports of the lead entity must reflect the contributions of local partnership entities.

(5) *Public information.* The designated community must have written procedures in place describing the means by which citizens of the community and partnership organizations will be kept informed of the community's activities and progress in implementing the strategic plan, consistent with the principal objective of community based partnerships pursuant to § 25.202(a)(2). These procedures must be kept current and compliance with them documented on an ongoing basis.

(c) *Reevaluation of designations.* On the basis of the performance reviews described in § 25.402, and subject to the provisions relating to the revocation of designation appearing at § 25.405, USDA will make findings as to the continuing eligibility for and the validity of the designation of any Empowerment Zone, Enterprise Community, or Champion Community.

(d) *Modification of designation.* Based on a rural zone or community's success in carrying out its strategic plan, and subject to the provisions relating to revocation of designation in accord-

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ance with § 25.405 and the requirements as to the number, maximum population and other characteristics of rural Empowerment Zones referenced in § 25.100, the Secretary may modify designations by reclassifying rural Empowerment Zones as Enterprise Communities or Enterprise Communities as Empowerment Zones.

[63 FR 19114, Apr. 16, 1998, as amended at 67 FR 13557, Apr. 24, 2002]

§ 25.405 Revocation of designation.

(a) *Basis for revocation.* The Secretary may revoke the designation of a rural area as an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community, or withdraw status as a Champion Community, if the Secretary determines, on the basis of the periodic monitoring and assessments described in § 25.402, that the applicant, lead managing entity, or the States or local governments in which the rural area is located have:

(1) Modified the boundaries of the area without written approval from USDA;

(2) Failed to make progress in implementing the strategic plan; or

(3) Not complied substantially with the strategic plan (which may include failing to apply funds as contained in the strategic plan without advance written approval from USDA).

(b) *Letter of Warning.* Before revoking the designation of a rural area as an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community, the Secretary will issue a letter of warning to the applicant, the lead managing entity (if different from the applicant) and the nominating States and local governments, with a copy to all affected Federal agencies of which USDA is aware:

(1) Advising that the Secretary has determined that the applicant and/or lead managing entity and/or the nominating local governments and State:

(i) Have modified the boundaries of the area without written approval from USDA; or

(ii) Are not complying substantially with, or have failed to make satisfactory progress in implementing the strategic plan; and

(2) Requesting a reply from all involved parties within 90 days of the receipt of this letter of warning.